

HEART OF THE HALL

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,
We thought the snow, and the wind, and the *cold* would never end, and yet the calendar pages kept turning, until we now find ourselves in April, with the campus in full bloom, and with a brand-new edition of *The Heart of the Hall* in hand. Perhaps as a response to the seemingly never-ending winter, our wonderful writers all produced articles centering around one unified theme: hope.

Our first article is a testimonial by Kimberly Stewart called “Finding Faith In (and Out) of a Hospital.” Stewart reflects on a severe health crisis, and how her faith in God and the support of her caretakers buoyed her spirits and carried her through those difficult times. Hope, both for her own recovery and in the divine plan guiding her fate, is woven throughout her moving testimony.

Following this is “Conscience in the Dark: Catholic Moral Struggle in *Daredevil*” by Carmine Sortino. Sortino eloquently points out that hope for redemption, his own and that of the supervillains Matt Murdock fights, or to use his heroic name, the Daredevil. This analysis brings the centrality of hope to the surface of this story, and other superhero stories of the same ilk.

Next, our publication was blessed with an opportunity to interview our University President Monsignor Joe Reilly. Reflecting on his time at Seton Hall as a student, rector, and now president, Msgr. Reilly expresses his optimism for the future of our university, both in terms of the services and programs offered by Seton Hall, and for the development of a closer-knit community. Read the full transcription of the interview under the title “Animated by Values: An Interview with Monsignor Joe Reilly.”

On a more bittersweet note, this edition contains the final contribution of Alexander Marinelli before his graduation this year! His last article with us is called “He Who Loves God, Loves His Own Soul: The Spirituality of St. Antony the Great,” and it follows Marinelli’s reflection on the Desert Fathers’ wisdom, and how they have inspired him to appreciate the beauty and wonder of his own God-given soul. Saying farewell and good luck to Alexander this semester, I am certainly very hopeful for his future, wherever he takes his considerable intelligence and discernment.

Finally, we close this edition with the second part of Joey Harrison’s short story, “The Parable of the Runner.” In the finale, our protagonist Cursor finds a better way to participate in the race of life, and finds hope not in the personal satisfaction of victory, but in self-sacrifice for the sake of others.

As the Easter season comes upon us, and we look hopefully towards the future, I would like to thank the many people who make this magazine possible. The contributions and support of our faculty advisors—Fr. Colin Kay, Msgr. Dennis Mahon, and Fr. Doug Milewski—cannot be adequately articulated, nor are there words to properly thank them. And finally, thank you, dear reader, and I hope you enjoy the Spring 2026 edition of *The Heart of the Hall*.

God bless,
Bridie McGlone, Editor-in-Chief.

Cover Photo: Luba

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Photo: Luba



Finding Faith In (and Out) of a Hospital

It happened so fast. I was not prepared for it—and other things that were to come.

It all started when I was nauseous on a Thursday. I threw up a couple of times and had to leave early from my Creative Writing workshop class. My parents and I thought it was the flu (it was the flu season). They sent me some Pedialyte and gummies via DoorDash. I liked the gummies. Just to be sure,

they also recommended that I go to the clinic, so I booked a visit on Saturday.

I stayed home on Friday, trying to rest. I wasn't very successful, to say the least. Not even trying the couches in the lounge helped. Meanwhile, my stomach felt harder and harder.

On Saturday, I drank a cold brew coffee from the dining hall to stay awake. I took an Uber to the

clinic to avoid the task of trying to climb uphill.

I barely made it there. I stumbled onto a chair in the doctor's office. She called 911.

The next thing I knew, I was in an ambulance getting attached to some fluids—I felt a little better when I was attached to the fluids—on the way to the hospital (specifically, the Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse, New York). “Would I get out in a day or two?” I thought to myself as I was rolled into the building. They did some tests on me. I liked it when I got my first ultrasound.

No, they said to me several hours later. I was to have emergency exploratory surgery as soon as possible. I gave my consent for the doctor to call my parents. My friend Manning was there for me as I was wheeled into the operating room. I was introduced to everyone who was to be working on me. Then, I was given the mask to breathe in the anesthetic gas...

It happened so fast.

But all along something else was happening very gradually. I was beginning to see how God was sending all these people to support me.

I woke up in one of the rooms in the intensive care unit, on a large hospital bed. I had a breathing tube forced down my throat. My parents were there, saying things like “We're so sorry” and “We got on the plane as soon as we could.”

The early days were a blur. I was still groggy from the anesthesia, sleeping a lot. I could not speak (because of the breathing tube) or move (yes, I had a catheter in me, too). I did learn that a third of my stomach had been removed after turning up dead (necrosis is the technical term) and that it would take me months to recover.

And before you ask, the doctors never found a definite cause for what happened to me, whether from a virus or my stomach somehow getting unluckily twisted. They don't want me to go through any more invasive tests (and I have gone through many invasive tests) after what I went through already.

Yet here I am on the Seton Hall campus writing this article while balancing other subjects. I have readily discussed it with my friend Joey, whom I met at the university chapel.

How did I get there? If I could sum it up in one word: faith. Yes, it turned out to have a bigger role in this than you think, and it still affects me to this day.

For me, this faith started in the little things. My mom sent me a picture of what I wrote on a whiteboard, still unable to speak, which I have barely any recollection of:

Dr. Valentino, Thank you for saving me!

- Kimberly.

Dr. Valentino was the surgeon in charge. I still don't know how I was able to do it. I could recognize that handwriting from a mile away!

She sent me another:

Phone Charger? I can take the the (sic) for more hours

Another one that I have no recollection of, likely for good reason.

The last one is on a blue board with a black screen, one of those geared toward young children that you can erase with a push of a button:

Dr. Valentino:

Thank you for saving me!

Kimberly

Thank you! How will you get the tube out?

Presumably, this was the last one I did before they removed the tube. A sun accompanies the writing. I never drew the best suns.

In short, I was still there, despite it all. Somehow. And the only way to continue was up.

It makes sense that I would get these pictures from my mom. She stayed with me all these months up there in Syracuse, where I had attended Syracuse University before getting sick. In the winter. Where it often gets below freezing.

Not to mention the life I had in Syracuse before, going to classes, working on homework, even having a few friends that still go there do this day. In fact, I chose the school primarily because it was one of the few that offered a creative writing major! Yet I digress.

When I was in the hospital, my mom tried to arrive as early as possible (before, she slept in the chair in my room), not easy with frozen roads. There, she stayed in my room, trying her best to cheer me on.

She prayed for me, too. She prayed to (at the time, blessed) St. Carlo Acutis, a young man who was devoted to the Eucharist, and used his talent at web design to create a whole website documenting Eucharistic miracles. He also enjoyed video games in his short life—like me. I think she picked the right choice.

She also had a good support group, even after my dad had to leave for work early on. Her rosary group back in my hometown of Houston prayed for me as well.

We wound up developing a tight bond up there, especially after I moved to the Ronald McDonald House for the next stage of my recovery. It's a really nice place, one of many Ronald McDonald Houses serving not only patients, but the families of patients as well. It did help that the Ronald McDonald House has a kitchen for meals (once she cooked green eggs and ham for me), a comfy living room with bookcases full of books and a TV, and even a gaming room—

not to mention a smiling Ronald McDonald statue sitting on a bench outside. I'm afraid to admit it, but I even developed a liking for the cheesy "rom-coms" she likes to watch—*The Accidental Husband* (the title alone is iconic), *Maid in Manhattan*, *The Proposal*, and the like. I still think back on these memories there, how we bonded together.

We went to Mass together, too. The local Catholic church, part of the university itself, is only a short walk away from the Ronald McDonald House, so getting there helped me practice my endurance. I tried to stay awake as much as I could during the service, but my mom always reminded me not to try to do the things that I couldn't do, such as not standing up for too long. After the service, we were treated to a delicious brunch of scrambled eggs, potatoes, and fruit!

It was not always easy for her, too. She had to be my caretaker, especially after I moved in with her. It ranged from taking me up and down the stairs to giving me medicine to cleaning and changing bandages on a bad wound I had developed when the staples were



removed (I do not want to get too graphic, but I did not like the look of that wound)! Yet she never gave up, just doing the best for her daughter.

The nurses in the hospital were so kind to me, too, helping me despite the obstacles not only on my side, but theirs as well. They had to do so many duties—changing my IV bag, serving me meals, walking me to the bathroom, giving me physical therapy (from walking me around the floor to helping me climb up a short sequence of steps), and so on. Yet, they were so happy to see me, and I became so happy to see them. I don't know why they took such a liking to me. I know that I was the youngest patient in the hospital wing, so I guess they liked seeing someone close to their own age. Either that, or they just liked me. I remember that they were so interested in the Disney movies I watched on the small TV, or the *Alice in Wonderland* book that I got from the library.

I enjoyed reading *Alice in Wonderland*. I had it in a double edition with its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass*, back home, but I never completed reading it. They let me take it to the Ronald McDonald House, where I finally finished it. It's still there; I left it on a table for other kids (some fresh out of the hospital like me, or even their siblings!) to read and like it as much as I did. Kindness sure does rub off on you.

It was not enough though. We still needed to give back to the nurses. We went back to the hospital with a box of sweet cookies just for them. They were so grateful! There was one by the name of Zoe that we had gotten especially close with. My mom sent me her phone number after many months, telling me to text her.

I said, "Hi! This is Kimberly Stewart, one of your patients. Thank you for treating me so well while I was in the hospital!"

She replied, "Omg Kim! I'm working right now and just told everyone you texted! How are you doing?"

It's a small thing, but these relationships that

cropped up are something that I will cherish. I wouldn't have met these people if not for my being sick. Their unconditional altruism was the light of God shining through them.

I even went on a pilgrimage to Italy with my family just a few months after I got back to Houston, where we saw various holy sites in Rome—even Pope Leo right after he got elected! I was surprised at how far I walked each day (at one point, two miles) to see them. My favorite, though, was not in Rome, but in Assisi, where St. Carlo Acutis lived. It was a full-circle moment for me to see his tomb itself, see the young man to whom my mom prayed to intercede for me. He still gives me hope, in the form of a card with a prayer in my purse, as I take new steps every day. I still thank him.

I was, and still am, doing good. Those who supported me—my parents, the surgeons who saved me, the Ronald McDonald House that took my mom and me in, even the deceased Carlo Acutis all helped me and continue to help me as I began and continue on this new chapter, to where I am at Seton Hall today and beyond.

That isn't to say that the journey was without lasting scars, both figuratively and literally. I still apply Cicatricure cream every day to the one going down my belly, with bumpy ridges where they placed the staples and an especially sensitive dip where the wound finally closed. It has slowly lightened up, but it will never fully go away. I do not want to wish this on anybody. However, I have learned so much from it. Despite my suffering, I brought so many people together. And we got to make the best of it for ourselves and others. No matter where I am or what happens to me in the future, God always has a plan for me—as he does for all of us, even if the reveal might be more gradual than we like, or even come to us in a most unexpected way.

By Kimberly Stewart



Conscience IN THE DARK

Catholic moral struggles in Daredevil

How far can we go in the pursuit of what is right? *Daredevil* (2015) is a Netflix television show centered around the Marvel Comics superhero of the same name. What sets this show apart from traditional superhero media is its focus on Catholicism as a central point for its virtues. The story centers around Matthew Murdock, a baptized Catholic lawyer who has suffered from blindness since he was a child. However, the same chemicals that blinded him also gave him enhanced senses, thus providing him with a new purpose. At night, he becomes the superhero Daredevil, delivering vigilante justice to criminals on the streets of Hell's Kitchen. Matt's experiences as a Catholic man, struggling with his temptations and his faith, serves as a perfect mirror of the strength and importance of faith when it comes to doing what is right. The show depicts the impor-

tance of doing what is right, regardless of the cost, and the strength gained from obeying our conscience and refusing to give into temptation. Matt Murdock's journey in *Daredevil* reflects this struggle through several stages of spiritual development: his decision to pursue justice despite moral uncertainty; his belief in the possibility of redemption even for the worst criminals; his crisis of faith when suffering pushes him toward despair; and his reaffirmation of his moral convictions when he refuses to kill Wilson Fisk. Through these moments, the series portrays the struggle between temptation and conscience that lies at the heart of Christian moral life.

The first scene of the show sets the tone for these themes perfectly. Matt goes to Confession, where he seeks penance for his sins from a priest friend of his, Father Lanton. He discusses how his father, a box-

er, instilled him with a sense of righteous fury as he asks Father Lanton for forgiveness "not for what I've done, but what I'm going to do." The importance of Confession to Murdock before he begins his crusade as Daredevil sets the moral standard for his cause. He knows what he is about to do is morally murky, but he makes sure to stay in accordance with moral law, entering his path with a sense of conscience that defines who he is and what he does. Furthermore, the act of attempting to forgive sins pre-emptively through Confession is not permissible by Catholic teaching, reinforcing the idea that Matt is trying to stay within the bounds of his morality by the act of Confession, but is struggling to achieve this in the way he acts and justifies the situation he is in. Matt's spiritual journey begins with his decision to pursue justice, despite knowing that the path he is taking exists in a morally murky space.

The second season of the show perfectly describes and lays out Matt's morals as they

relate to Frank Castle, a vigilante who calls himself the Punisher and delivers his justice by taking the lives of criminals, a line which Matt swore never to cross. This connects to Matt's moral struggle by displaying his commitment to believing in redemption, even when it comes to the cruelest of criminals. One scene in particular involves the Punisher chaining Daredevil onto a roof after his failure to catch Castle. During this scene, Castle and Murdock clash over their moral ideologies. Castle claims that the criminals he takes out aren't worth saving, whereas Matt makes the argument that, although he beats up those who would seek to hurt others, he gives them something that Castle does not—the chance to try again. While Castle states that "there's no good in the people he puts down" and that Murdock is "one bad day away from being [him]," Matt refutes this argument, claiming that "he's seen

hope and redemption," and that "there is goodness in people, even you." His constant search for redemption and belief in the human spirit, despite its various flaws and sins, perfectly exemplifies the strength of his faith. For Murdock, every criminal is worth saving, following the moral imperative against murder regardless of the outcome.

Despite Matt's commitment to justice and moral law, the show displays the crisis of faith which he faces during his crusade as Daredevil. Matt's commitment to justice eventually leads him into a personal crisis of faith, where suffering causes him to question his purpose and his belief in God. At the end of the second season, he loses the woman he loves and tempo-

Matt's spiritual journey begins with his decision to pursue justice, despite knowing that the path he is taking exists in a morally murky space.

rarily loses his hearing. However, towards the beginning of the third season, he regains his hearing when his greatest enemy, the Kingpin, returns to the city. This causes him to question his belief in God and whether or not He is there for him in his hour of need.

In this dark hour, Matt questions whether or not his approach is working, and how far he will have to go to be a true protector of his city and its citizens. In doing so, Murdock wrestles with his temptation to kill the Kingpin, knowing it will go against everything he believes in. In one specific moment, Matt speaks to Sister Maggie, a nun who helps restore him back to health after his injuries. While he recovers, he questions if the vigilante work was truly God's calling, claiming that "God is silent" and that he'd "rather die as the 'Devil' than live as Matthew Murdock." This crisis of faith shows the struggle with temptation that we enter when hard times fall upon us. Matt feels a moral obligation to be Daredevil, but he cannot justify his cause to himself anymore after all he has lost. The impact that his journey has had on the people he loves has caused him to re-evaluate whether or not he is abiding by the morality he believed he

was achieving through his time as Daredevil. Matt's encounter with doubt and despair is the result of a man who has suffered and been broken down by the world and, as a result, has fallen to dark places that force him to confront who he is, what he believes, and how far he is willing to go to show his commitment to justice.

It is at the very end of the show where we see the strongest allegory for redemption of the soul through Daredevil. In the final scene of the third season, he comes face to face with Wilson Fisk, the crime lord who has made the people of New York suffer due to his criminal activities. The two clash in a final battle for the "soul of the city," with Murdock knocking him down and having the opportunity to take his life, all while Fisk goads him to do it, knowing this is the line which he cannot cross and from which there is no coming back. Despite all of the pain and suffering he, his friends, and his city have endured at the hands of this man, Murdock still refuses to give into temptation. As Fisk asks for Matt to kill him, Matt reaffirms his faith, stating that "God knows I want to, but you don't get to destroy who I am!" Much as Jesus was tempted by the actual Devil in the wilderness, he resists the temptation to do that which is sinful or that which would be easiest and chooses what is right. He sends Fisk to prison, knowing the risk he could pose if he escapes or is released. His commitment to justice and to his conscience reinforces the center of who Matt is—a man who struggles, who is flawed and uncertain of what he needs to do to enact change and serve as a force of justice, but knows that there is a morally correct way

to bring justice, even if it isn't easy. His conscience, defined and strengthened by his Catholic faith, guides him to his redemption, saving his soul from the trap of sin and redefining his commitment to moral justice.

The strong Catholic themes present in *Daredevil* are not accidental. The series is based on and heavily inspired by the original comic book runs of the titular character. The original character was developed in the 1960s by comic book creator Stan Lee and later deeply shaped by writers like Frank Miller, one of the first *Daredevil* writers who established the foundation for the character for other writers by emphasizing Matt Murdock's Catholic identity as central to his moral struggle. Catholicism provides a powerful framework for storytelling because it focuses heavily on themes such as sin, confession, redemption, and moral responsibility, all of which are essential to the stories of superheroes. Much like the lives of saints in Christian tradition, Matt's journey reflects a constant battle between temptation and virtue. Saints are often remembered not because they were perfect, but because they struggled with doubt and suffering while remaining faithful to their convictions. In a similar way, *Daredevil* represents a fictional version of heroic virtue: a flawed individual who repeatedly faces moral temptation but continues striving toward justice and goodness.

Overall, *Daredevil* depicts a genuinely flawed Catholic man, one who struggles with temptation and with his purpose regarding his faith. But at the end of the day, Matt Murdock fights for what is right as a lawyer and fights as a vigilante in accordance with his conscience and moral law. Faith is not easy, and the struggle with temptation is always present, but the refusal to give into temptation and the choice to listen to our conscience provides a way for every person to act in accordance with the way of Christ and establish a true commitment to justice through moral law.

By Carmine Sortino

Photo: Martin Alghren



Animated by Values

An Interview with University President Monsignor Joseph Reilly

Last semester, I was blessed with the opportunity to have a conversation with our very own University President, Monsignor Joseph R. Reilly, S.T.L., Ph.D., to discuss his first year in the role. Over the course of our chat, I was taken not only by his intelligence and competency in this position, but by his affability and drive to build a deep sense of community at Seton Hall. I would like to extend my thanks to Msgr. Reilly and his team for their generosity of time and for a lovely conversation.

Q. So, just to start with, President of Seton Hall University, what does that job entail? What does your day-to-day look like?

A. I try to have Mass first thing in the morning, Fr. John Chadwick, who lives here. He's the vicar general and a good friend. He and I will normally say Mass up here in the Oratory. Then meetings start, pretty much, most of the time, by eight o'clock in the morning. There are scheduled meetings for different people on the cabinet either every week or every other week. I have a meeting with the Vice Presidents regularly, and we have a cabinet meeting every week. And then there's, you know, meeting with guests, and people who want to find out more about the University. I'll try to spend some time walking around campus as well. Most evenings, especially during the week,

there's fundraising stuff, especially with the comprehensive campaign, so either an event for that or a dinner with friends of the University. So, it's pretty busy.

Q. When you talk about meetings with people who also run the University, are you there as a guiding force, are you giving instructions, or are people reporting to you?

A. As far as I understand leadership, obviously, there's an individual who is responsible—that's me in a sense—for the running of the University, but it's not a job on my own. There are responsibilities that we share with people, whether it's finance, alumni relations, student affairs, or whatever. So that's the Cabinet that meets, all those five presidents. It's a regular meeting of those because the work of running a university is really a collaborative effort of people and their expertise, with their teams contributing to the success of the University and every part of that, and

rising when there are challenges coming up. It's not just me facing them, or just one individual; it's a team working together.

Q. How did you come into this role? I know you were selected at some point by the University, but did the bishop also have to be involved with that because you're a priest as well?

A. Because I'm a priest, the bishop asked me to consider putting my name in, so I did that after some prayer and discernment. There was a whole process with several other candidates, and then the last three of us came to campus for interviews with different constituencies, from all over the campus and different aspects of the University. And then, once they asked me to serve and I accepted the position, I had to be released by the archbishop to serve, because I am serving here as a priest.

Q. So, are you no longer a diocesan priest?

A. Oh yeah, I am. So, all the priests here at Seton Hall who are priests of the Archdiocese of Newark are on what's called specialized ministry or special ministry. So I'm part of that group of priests who work on special ministry. So, I'm still a parish priest, and I go and serve Mass in a parish where I've been going now for almost 34 years. I was the parish priest there full time, and since I've had other works—I taught at Seton Hall Prep, and then working here—I still go back there on weekends for Mass. Almost all the priests are diocesan priests, either from Newark or Paterson.

Q. You mentioned Seton Hall Prep. From what I understand, you've been around Seton Hall your entire life. Can you give us a run-down on the various roles you've had at Seton Hall?

A. It's a good bit of my life. I came to Seton Hall Prep in 1979 as a freshman. I was here all through high school; the Prep was still on campus. I was here for four years at the College Seminary, which is now off-campus on Center Street. And then I came back here in 2002 to work at the College Seminary as the rector, and I've been here on campus at the College

Seminary and the Major Seminary, the Provost's Office, and now here.

Q. Have you ever attended or worked at a school that wasn't Seton Hall affiliated?

A. I studied when I was in seminary in Rome, and I studied at a couple of universities. One was run by Jesuits, and the other was run by Carmelites. And when I got my doctorate, I was at Fordham University. But my ministry service as a priest has all been at Seton Hall.

Q. Do you find that this helps prepare you for this role? Or do you find that sometimes you can only see Seton Hall, and there aren't as many perspectives outside?

A. I think it's a blessing more than a disadvantage. Like I said before, though I have a particular role of service in the community, it's about working with the people. And knowing the people here and having those relationships was very helpful for me stepping into this role. I know these are the people to be trusted, to be given responsibility. I think it helped to expedite the transition into this leadership position. I've never seen it as a disadvantage. I hope that I am an open person, so that it's not, "this is how we have to do things," but the understanding that the way things run at Seton Hall isn't just in a bubble, but it's part of a larger higher education experience in the United States, and we're part of the larger Catholic Church. All those influences help to make Seton Hall what it is. We have a unique history, but it is part of the larger experience of Catholic higher education in the United States, and part of the Catholic Church in terms of that service to the Church.

Q. You mentioned interaction with other Catholic universities. Is that one of your jobs as the president, representing us in those conversations?

A. Yes. So, there are a couple of different associations. The one I mentioned is the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, which meets once a year. They have different gatherings throughout the

course of the year, but the general gathering is once in Washington, at the end of January. That is a time for Catholic colleges and universities around the country to share ideas and resources, and kind of be a support to one another. In the State of New Jersey, we're part of an organization called the Independent Colleges of New Jersey, the ICONJ. That group meets together several times throughout the year, so that we can be a force in the state to help educate students. But also, at the same time, if there are resources, it serves as a conduit for us to get those resources as well.

Q. Returning to how you've been at Seton Hall for such a long time, what changes have you noticed? What's different between my student experience and yours?

A. As an undergrad, the first thing was the Prep on campus. Mooney Hall and Duffy Hall were theirs, so you had guys walking around in blazers most of the time, that's no longer here. I was on both sides of that. But a lot of buildings on campus are either new—they weren't here when I was here as a student—or they've been refreshed, like the University Center. When I was here as a student in 1983-87, there was only one dorm that was there; we had Boland Hall and part of Aquinas Hall. They added on to that. All the new dorms going towards Center Street are all put up. There's been an expansion in terms of opportunities. Some of the programming, even campuses, like Nutley is expanded, that wasn't there either. There's been growth in terms of expanding the population. The experience on campus is now more for both residential students and students who are commuting, whereas it was much more commuter students when I was here.

Q. Is there anything that you had or experienced as a student that you would want to bring back? Are you thinking of moving the Prep back next door?

A. [Laughter] I've never been asked that question before. No, I think Seton Hall is a better place than when I was here. I think Seton Hall has more opportunities for students. I'm not longing for things to



Photo: Domenic Destefano

be back the way they were. I think who we are now, what the University is right now, is great. It's become even better than it was when I was a student, and I think our trajectory is such that we're going to continue that growth.

Q. You started as President on July 1, 2024. As of now, you've been president for five hundred and twenty-eight days. How does that feel, for one?

A. It feels very good in one sense. I've grown a great deal of comfort in being a priest who happens to be serving as president. When I first got here, it was unlike any position I've ever had before, so kind of growing into the all-consuming nature of being in this position. There's not a lot of downtime and you're expected to be present, to be

president, in many ways. Kind of giving myself into that, I'm much more comfortable in that regard than I was in the beginning. Part of that is a consequence of knowing some of the routines. After the first year, you kind of know what is to be expected of you. And

I think the more anyone grows into a position of responsibility, the more comfortable you become, the more your natural personality is able to come out and express itself. I'm at a place where that is happening to me, so I'm grateful for that.

Q. Do you find that in your position, you're able to make personal connections with the people who run Seton Hall, but with students as well?

A. To a certain degree. So, some students, like SGA, I meet with regularly. And then, having the opportunity to be across campus from the University Center, I've met with some students and become friendly. It's a little bit different than before, because life is a lot more structured.

Q. When you say 'different', do you mean now

that you serve as president as opposed to as a parish priest?

A. Different serving as president. Your time is not really your own; getting time off is a difficult thing. You have to schedule that in, as opposed to just 'Friday I'm gonna catch a movie'. My fourth-grade teacher, with whom I stayed friends, has been sick, and I used to get out every week or every couple of weeks to see her. But it's been about four months, because of stuff, I just haven't had a chance to get down there. There's less control over my own schedule. That's the thing that's different.

Q. When you do get a chance to meet with students, do you find they're interested in what you do,

that they're comfortable with you?

A. I like to think that they're comfortable with me! [Laughter] One of the things is that, in all honesty, Bridie, I never thought I'd be doing this job. Sometimes I'm sitting in meetings, and I think, 'This is me?' But

this is—more than any other time in my life—I believe where God wants me to be. That gives me great consolation, even in the challenges. I'm the same person I was when I was over there, working at the parish, working at the archdiocese. So, I'm the same kind of person. So, I think there's a level of comfort that people have with me, whether that's colleagues that I'm working with or students that are here. There's sometimes a surprise with students that the president is talking to them, but I think that's more the position itself. I hope it is!

Q. I wanted to ask, looking back on the presidency so far, is there anything that you're particularly proud of, or happy that you did?

A. It's subtler things, for me. So just yesterday

it happened, we have this cabinet meeting every week. One of the things that's very important to me as a person, that I've tried to do it wherever I've served as a priest, is forming a sense of community. People have different roles and responsibilities, certain positions in the community, but there's value in every person, and we should be acknowledging the value of each person, whatever they do. So yesterday—it's kind of a silly thing, but it struck me, to the point where I wrote it down in my notes. One of the vice presidents was—they have to give reports on their things every week—about to start his report, but before he started he said 'I just want to say thank you to one of the other vice presidents about a thing that happened.' And I just—what came into my mind and into my heart was that we're practicing gratitude with one another, and I think that's an important thing. For me, it was the realization that we're not just working with each other, we're not just filling roles, but we were valuing the contributions of one another. And what that says is that there's a level of connecting of persons, of appreciation for persons. I didn't say, like how your parents say, 'Make sure you say thank you to your grandparents for the Christmas present' or whatever. It was a spontaneous practice of gratitude, and to me, that was a beautiful development, because I think sometimes in larger institutions, there can either be isolation and silos with people doing their things, sometimes very well. But when people have a sense that they're working with one another, that's a whole different story. And I think it reflects more what the values are that make up this community, in terms of being a Catholic community, but I also think it helps everyone to see that forming community is not just Joe Reilly's responsibility, but it's something that we all share because we're a part of this larger community. I certainly have a particular role, and I'm happy to do that, but it wasn't me empowering them, just witnessing that and creating an environment for that—I took heart with that, because I think it's a good sign for the University itself. Sometimes I think there are a lot of



plans for developing the campus and growing things for the University, but to me, at least in the initial stages, it's more the intangibles that are actually more impactful in helping to form community and making people feel valued than necessarily looking at a new building.

Q. Is there something that you're particularly looking forward to in the next little while?

A. I'm looking forward to being part of a successful strategic plan—I'm not just saying that. I really believe a lot of this is very new to me, but what the community of Seton Hall University came up with for the strategic plan is beautiful, because I think it puts the students first, and it's animated by the values that have been a part of this community since 1856. I think it helps to express who we are and that together, moving forward, we're going to grow into something that is even better than we've seen before, better than we are right now. And being a part of that, having a hand in that, or even just having to be the public face, I'm not the only one, but one of the public faces of that, makes me very happy.

Q. I don't know if these are harder or easier than the others, but I have some fun questions. Favorite building on campus?

A. I have to say the Chapel at St. Andrew's. In terms of my experience of being formed as a person, that chapel hands down.

A. *Least favorite building?*

A. Duffy Hall. I'd love to just—I shouldn't say that.

Q. *What class do you remember the most from undergrad?*

A. One was Dr. Peter Ahr, who taught a class on the Gospel of John; it was a phenomenal class. Professor Bill Smith taught Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. It was not an animated class. He was a little bit dry, but it was a great class.

Q. *What's the strangest thing you've gotten to do as President?*

A. To ride in a golf cart that's named Reilly.

Q. *There's a golf cart named Reilly?*

A. There's a guy whose name is Joe Reilly, and he's a donor. And so, he came to campus for a tour, and

he had a tough time getting around. So, he donated a golf cart, which is in the basement of Bethany Hall. Driving around campus and the plate on the front says REILLY.

Q. *What's the coolest thing you've gotten to do?*

A. We were down in Haiti meeting with the university down there. I got to fly in a helicopter from Santo Domingo to this shrine of our Lady of Altigracia.

Q. *What do you do in your spare time?*

A. I walk. I try to do it in the morning. I like walking for exercise. I love to read. So that's something I try to do in my spare time. Thankfully, I have a great family. I enjoy spending time with my family; my three brothers are in the area, and I have cousins in the area.

Q. *What are you reading right now?*

A. I just actually am waiting for a book that just came out, by this German woman, who was a poet and a theologian, *Bread Grows in Winter*. It's a meditation on the Church; this author is talking about her experience with the Church.

Q. *And last, but not least: if you could say one thing to all the Seton Hall students, what would it be?*

A. One thing I would like to say to everyone is that the love of God is the most important thing in the world. It's what helps me to get up in the morning, helps me to do this job, it's the hope that I have for myself and for everybody here. Brushing up against and making my own and having people make their own with the love of God, which is a beautiful thing, that becomes flesh in Jesus, but all of us can experience it, whether we share the faith or not.

Photo: Luba



“He Who Loves God Loves His Own Soul”

The Spirituality of St. Antony the Great

Being my name saint in Baptism, St. Antony the Great has always had a special place in my heart. Years ago, when I was praying for God to show me whether I should choose Ephrem the Syrian or Antony, He gave me a simple yet obvious answer: a few days later after praying, one of the first friends that I had made in the Coptic Church came back from a trip to the Texas monastery and told me

that he brought a gift for me; that gift was *The Life of Antony* by St. Athanasius; at that moment, I knew St. Antony chose me—although I don't know why and may not ever know until I depart from this life. Since then, I have always kept his life in mind and admired his teachings in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Regrettably, however, I had never looked into the treasures that are his letters or really developed a



relationship with him. This began to change as I felt called to write this article on a certain theme in his spirituality: the relationship between loving God and loving oneself.

This topic is especially personal to me, as I have always been particularly difficult on myself when it comes to the spiritual journey. It is not a healthy kind of pushing myself to do my very best work, but rather an *unhealthy, burdensome* kind. I often forget what it truly means to be a Christian—to be a child of God—and, because of this, I too often doubt my salvation and wonder if what I am doing in my spiritual journey is truly enough.

We are saved by faith and not by works, yet I often struggle to love myself and thus wonder how God can love me in light of my shortcomings. Not coincidentally, St. Antony warns us against this very problem, reminding us that this is not a healthy outlook on our Christian life. Not only did he sometimes struggle with this, but the monks who followed him did as well. Thus, in the God-given wisdom acquired throughout his many decades as a hermit, he spoke to the monks and receptors of his letters to teach them how to overcome these very same spiritual and mental burdens.

For example, in *Letter VI*, St. Antony says, "...and he who loves God, loves his own soul."¹ This statement can very much be used as a summary of his entire spiritual outlook. But how do we fulfill this?

Throughout his seven letters and teachings in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* and in *The Life of Antony*, there is a threefold plan to loving God and thus loving oneself: 1) understanding the human condition and our purpose as human beings created in the image of God, 2) loving God through striving for virtue, and 3) loving ourselves by recognizing that we are God's children and are always led by grace, leading us to the eternal Paradise that is promised to us.

As previously highlighted, the first step in fulfilling St. Antony's spiritual outlook is to know our purpose as human beings created in the image of God. Before we can know this purpose, however, we must first understand the condition which we find ourselves in. Ever since the fall in the Garden of Eden, we are born fallen from grace; we are disconnected from the Creator, prone to sin, and suffering an end that was never intended for us—namely, death. In St. Antony's mind,

¹ Antony the Great. *Letter VI*. In *The Letters of Antony the Great*, translated by Derwas J. Chitty (Oxford: SLG Press, 1975), p. 24.

however, this is the first step in being reconciled with God. He says in the same letter, "For he who knows his own disgrace, seeks again his elect grace: and who-so knows his own death, also knows his life eternal."² Just as a man only desires medicine when he realizes that he is sick, so, too, only when we understand our condition as creatures fallen and diseased with sin can we begin to seek God and the grace that He awaits to bestow upon us. Acknowledging our need for God, then, finally allows us to understand our purpose—which is ultimately to love Him and be reconciled with Him. Fittingly, St. Antony encourages us to be pure before God and reclaim our inheritance:

Let us now prepare in all holiness to cleanse the senses of our mind, that we may be clean by the baptism of Jesus, so as to offer ourselves a sacrifice to God. And this Paraclete Spirit comforts us and brings

us back to our beginning, to recover our inheritance and the dominion of that same comforting Spirit.³

Through baptism, we are freed from the bondage of sin and receive the Holy Spirit who restores us to our original, divine condition which death has no hold over. Subsequently, it is with this restoration that we become prepared to work toward perfect love for our Creator.

Now that we desire God and know that we need to love Him, how can we achieve this? For St. Antony, we love God when we strive for virtue, as to work toward virtue is to treasure God's original design for us. It is for this reason that the holy hermit told his followers, "And as we have received the soul as a deposit, let us preserve it for the Lord, that He may recognize His work the same as He made it."⁴ In

² Antony the Great, *Letter VI*, Chitty, p. 25.

³ Antony the Great, *Letter VII*, Chitty, p. 30.

⁴ Athanasius. *The Life of Antony* 20, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene*

making an effort to preserve our soul as God intended, we show that we truly seek a loving relationship with Him. This, however, is only the beginning, as we must develop this relationship that we so earnestly desire. Thankfully, St. Antony has already laid out a plan for us to do so:

Pray continually; avoid vain-glory; sing-psalms before sleep and on awakening; hold in your heart the commandments of Scripture; be mindful of the works of the saints that your souls being put in remembrance of the commandments may be brought into harmony with the zeal of the saints.⁵

This method by St. Antony is not just a laundry list of works to tire ourselves in vain; rather, it is a compass for orienting our entire lives in God's presence. Even when we do not notice any immediate changes our souls are always growing closer to Him. In fact, in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, there

was a time when St. Antony performed these very tasks and wondered whether his soul was even benefiting from them. He asked God in despair, "Lord, I want to be saved but these thoughts do not leave me alone. What shall I do in my affliction?"⁶ In response, St. Antony was shown a man doing his exact routine: he prayed, worked, prayed, and worked again. This man ended up being an angel, sent by God to show St. Antony to keep doing exactly what he was doing and, afterward, the saint left this encounter renewed with joy and hope.

The confirmation of St. Antony's method was not meant to be a lesson only for him, of course. As *Fathers of the Christian Church Second Series Volume IV*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 25.

⁵ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 55, Schaff, p. 54.

⁶ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*. "Anthony the Great 1" translated by Benedicta Ward SLG (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975), pp. 6-7.

St. Antony says, "...and he who loves God, loves his own soul." This statement can very much be used as a summary of his entire spiritual outlook. But how do we fulfill this?



long as we strive for virtue by holding the commandments in our heart, as well as spending time in prayer and with the word of God, we will naturally grow in our love for the Lord. St. Antony beautifully encourages us and says, “The advent of Jesus helps us to do what is good, until we have destroyed all our vices. Then Jesus will say to us, ‘Henceforth, I call you not servants, but brethren.’”⁷

Now that we have both recognized our need for God and have diligently begun to love Him, this brings us to the final step: loving ourselves by understanding that we are children of God, keeping this very fact in our hearts at all times. In both his life and letters, the principal way St. Antony endured the arduousness of the ascetical life and afflictions of demons was by taking consolation and strength in the fact that he was a child of God. St. Athanasius notes a famous event in St. Antony’s life, where one day he was physically tormented by demons so brutally that a few monks found him in a cave, seemingly dead from his injuries. Although the torment had ended, St. Antony mocked the demons and boldly proclaimed, “Here am I, Antony; I flee not from your stripes, for even if you inflict more nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ.”⁸ Because he understood that he was a child of God always receiving His love and care, St. Antony refused to allow even torture from the demons to inhibit his efforts to live in God’s presence.

Taking an example from the holy hermit, we should always remember that, as children of God, we are in His eyes even greater than the angels—being created in His image and likeness; therefore, He will never leave us nor forsake us. Moreover, despite the many victories that he had over the demons, he exhorts the other monks not to rejoice in the subjection of demons but to rejoice in the fact that they are children of God with their names written in the heavens, “For the fact that our names are written in heaven is

⁷ Antony the Great, *Letter III*, Chitty p. 11; John 15:15
⁸ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 9, Schaff, pp. 16-17).

a proof of our virtuous life.”⁹ At all times in his life—no matter the trials or situations he faced—St. Antony valued being a child of God called to eternal life above all else and commanded his followers to do the same.

Recognizing that we are children of God, however, does not just mean that God loves us; it means that we need to love ourselves as well. And, for St. Antony, loving ourselves leaves no room for sloth, despair, or having burdensome expectations that are heavier than what God Himself expects of us. As recorded in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, there was a time when a brother asked St. Antony to pray for him. Although this may seem like an ordinary and innocent request, the old hermit saw through the young monk’s

⁹ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 38, Schaff, pp. 39-40.



heart and realized that this was a man who asked for prayers because he was reluctant—probably for many reasons—to pray before God for himself and preferred that someone else do it. In response, St. Antony told him, “I will have no mercy upon you, nor will God have any, if you yourself do not make an effort and if you do not pray to God.”¹⁰ Praying for myself has always been something I have struggled with, as I too often believe I am unable to approach God in my present state, either because of sin, anxiety, or despair. St. Antony shows, however, that this state of mind is directly opposed to what God wants for us; if we do not diligently attempt to seek healing for our souls, then there is no opportunity for medicine. This is not because the Lord does not love us, but because He cannot

show mercy to us if we do not show mercy to ourselves. Can a doctor heal a patient who refuses to enter his clinic? Relevant to this instance in St. Antony’s life, St. Athanasius records his speech to the monks, where he reminds them that we will only achieve virtue if we care for our souls like God cares for them:

For the Lord aforetime hath said, ‘The kingdom of heaven is within you; Wherefore virtue hath need at our hands of willingness alone, since it is in us and is formed from us. For when the soul hath its spiritual faculty in a natural state virtue is formed.’¹¹

Although the kingdom of heaven is within us, we cannot reap

¹⁰ *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, “Antony the Great 16,” Ward, pp. 10.

¹¹ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 20, Schaff, pp. 25-26.

the benefits of it if we do not love ourselves enough to make sincere efforts in our spiritual life. Just like he told the young monk, St. Antony once again teaches that to be a child of God means we must love ourselves as God loves us, and the very act of loving ourselves entails doing everything in our power to follow the Lord’s grace, asking him to sanctify our souls back into the “perfectly pure and natural state”¹² so that they may ever rejoice in hope.¹³

It is my prayer that this article can help those who experience the same spiritual troubles as me, i.e., struggling to love themselves even though they should recognize how deeply loved they are by God, by giving them hope and encouragement to continue the race. If we ever feel discouraged, let us remember that we are always surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who are always cheering us on.¹⁴ Too often do we forget just how abundant God’s grace and mercy are, and so I believed it was important to remind not only others of this fact but also myself by using the life and teachings of one of the holiest men to ever live. The research for this piece has certainly helped me grow closer to my beloved patron saint, and I hope it will inspire you all to seek a relationship with him as well. I have no doubt that he aided me in writing this article, all for God’s glory! As always, glory be to the Holy Trinity forever, amen.

By Alexander Marinelli

¹² Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 34, Schaff, p. 37.

¹³ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* 42, Schaff, pp. 43-44.

¹⁴ Hebrews 12:1



The Parable of the Runner

Part 2

Continued from Vol VII // Issue I

Cursor had to struggle on his own, with only the vicious crowd to guide his steps by demanding him to go further. He was responsible for motivating himself, determining what to do and where to go. The weather was bleak as Cursor had to face an endless downpour of freezing rain each day. The hills Cursor had faced in the past now became mountains made of rigid rocks. What kept Cursor going? It was the success promised to him by the crowd—the desire to gain a better place in the race. He drove himself

further like a chariot horse. Every person he passed caused a smile to carve up his stone, cold face, knowing he was getting closer to the leading pack. Yet the smile did not last, it fled along with the person he had passed.

Up and down, up and down, the racers went across the jagged mountainside. Each time they conquered a mountain, another one, taller than the last appeared. Cursor cast his gaze upward for the first time in a while, but all he saw was a flat blanket of black

clouds that shrouded the heavens away from his sight. All around him was darkness. It seemed like ages since he felt the Sun's warm presence. He wondered, Did the Sun even exist? Was there another reason for the light? Was it just an invention of the human mind that could not bear the harsh reality of the Race?

Where was the Sun during the awful cracks of lightening? Where was the Sun's golden rays when tear droplets fell from the heavens and drowned the plants below? Cursor did not know. The mountains around him became walls, reflecting the state of his imprisoned mind. The ground below disintegrated into darkness. Alone he stumbled in the shadows. Then, he found himself in a cavern with thirteen caves. He had no idea where he was coming from or where he was going. He turned his ears and listened to the hollow echo of the crowd: Pass more people, pass more people. Cursor followed the voices into the cave directly in front of him.

Then some clarity came when Cursor could see the front pack of racers. After all his strenuous efforts, he was finally there. Just as he took his first few strides toward the front pack, an anguished cry crept into his ears. He turned around watching as one of the runners slipped and fell into a murky puddle of muck. The runners behind kicked him down to the ground. Their heels crushed his fingers and bruised his legs, pushing his face deeper into the mud. The racers did what they had to do to progress in their place. Cursor could not pull his mind from the fallen racer.

The fallen racer's arms and legs were broken, blood gushed from his crushed face. Dirt, along with worms, covered every inch of his body. He was helpless and stuck, left alone to die because no one ever sought to help him.

Cursor's head turned back: ahead of him the front pack increased its distance. Their backs taunted him like a plate of gold. The glory and honor were right there in front of him. All he had to do was take it. Then he would be one of the best. Then... nothing. He would be one of the best, and that was it. Nothing else would come out of it. Cursor sighed as he knew what he had to do. He turned around, and when he had arrived upon the fallen racer, he reached out his hand to help pull him up. Then Cursor took him to a stream where he washed off his wounds. The racer then rose,



smiled at him, and was off. The smile was more precious than any person's Cursor had passed. He looked up and saw a bright light bursting through the clouds. It caused Cursor's shoulders to dip down as it illuminated the path ahead.

Cursor emerged back into the stream of racers, as golden leaves from above cheered him on. When he heard a cry for help, he swiftly turned around and found a runner stuck in a deep ditch. Cursor searched the forest until he found a vine. He threw the vine down into the ditch and lifted the runner out of the darkness and into the light. Another time he noticed a lone runner lying against a tree as she rubbed her swollen ankle. Cursor raised the runner up and allowed her to lean on him as he, like the Sun, provided clarity to her steps.

Now the time came when the wind, like the

foul breath of death, came to snatch away every wrinkled brown leaf that clung to a tree, leaving nothing but the pale bark. Their branches reached out toward the sky like decayed hands. A loud, somber gong rang out like the bells of judgment itself.

The third sector was complete.

All the racers were weak, tired, and worn by lap four. The majority of the racers continued to chase down first place, their minds blinded by their own wants until the end.

Cursor, however, was content with suffering for the sake of others. There were many moments when his lungs were on the verge of collapsing. Despite his exhaustion he continued to cheer on the racer before him, filling their hearts with warmth. When he reached the final uphill, every muscle in his body was engulfed in pure agony. He could hardly breathe as his lungs

The third sector was complete.

felt trapped under water. He could scarcely lift his legs which seemed like they weighed a thousand pounds. Still, Cursor did not give up. He charged up the hill until he finally reached the finish line. And then everything became dark. And then there was nothing. No sound, no feeling, no vision, no taste, no smell, and no consciousness, just emptiness. And that is the end of the story.

Now, the purpose of this parable is not just for runners. It is for all because every person is a runner, and every person is running a race whether they realize it is not. Every person will have to make that fatalful decision of determining where they have come from and where they are going. For the seasons are passing away, and in the blink of an eye, everyone will take their final step, savoring one last sip of fresh air,

as they cross the finish line into darkness. Their broken bodies collapsed under the unbearable weight of the weary world. So, does the race matter if everyone meets the same miserable end? Well, the ending of the story is not certain; there is more to the finish line than the end of a race. The story is not over yet.

For a haze of light came and called Cursor out of the shadows. Behold, standing before him were his coaches. For so long, they were gone, and honestly, he thought that they might have been gone forever, yet now they stand before him with a smile. They hugged each other tightly. Then his coaches took his hand and guided him to the award ceremony. A strong, sturdy marching melody grew louder and louder until he was surrounded by it. Behold, to his left and right, he saw

people of all teams—some of the racers he had helped were marching in one big band. They marched to the beat of the drum and the trumpets. Some waved unblemished white flags as they rejoiced. There was no more suffering, no more pain. No more sorrow, for all tears were wiped away. Ahead of Cursor was the podium; there, the first was last, and the last was first. And past the podium resting across the horizon was the Sun, and it was good. Cursor and his coaches and the other racers ran with open arms, ready to embrace the Sun.

By Joseph Harrison



MEET THE

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I am a junior English and philosophy major, with a minor in Italian. When I am not working on *The Heart of the Hall*, I'm running events for English Club, reading, or practicing guitar.



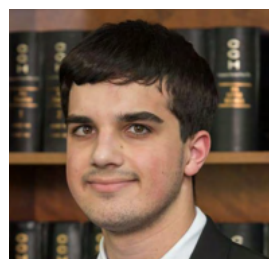
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I'm a freshman creative writing major from Missouri. I am excited to share my creativity through *Heart of the Hall*. Nothing is more important to me than my love for God and my Catholic faith.



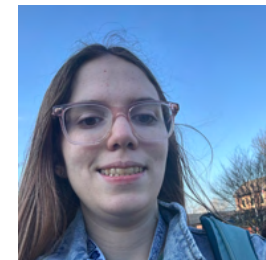
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Dr. Benjamin Jaros, Founder of *The Heart of the Hall*

Our current staff would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to our founder, Dr. Benjamin Jaros, '20, for both earning his Ph.D in Economics at Clemson University and for his upcoming wedding! We cannot thank you enough for founding this publication, and we wish you all the best in your endeavors.



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